

‘Man and birds are fain of climbing high’: Animals in 2 *Henry VI*

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Resumen

Las obras de Shakespeare hacen uso frecuente de imágenes de animales y referencias al mundo natural para ejemplificar, explicar o calificar el comportamiento humano, así como cuestiones sociales y políticas. La segunda parte de *Enrique VI*, la segunda obra de la primera tetralogía de Shakespeare, no es una excepción en este sentido. Sin embargo, las obras históricas han sido generalmente objeto de estudios pertenecientes a la esfera sociopolítica, y parecen haber sido prácticamente ignoradas por los estudios sobre animalidad y la ecocrítica. El presente artículo se centra en las imágenes de animales no humanos en *Enrique VI*, Parte II, y la representación de los animales en la obra, para explorar el tratamiento que Shakespeare le da a la relación entre animales humanos y no humanos en la modernidad temprana. Valiéndose de la tipología de representación animal de Greg Garrard, el estudio primero demuestra cómo Shakespeare, siguiendo los usos de la época, emplea metáforas y comparaciones animales basadas en una proyección antropomórfica previa de cualidades humanas hacia los animales. En un segundo paso, se identifica en la obra un grupo de imágenes relacionadas con el control animal para argumentar que estas alternan entre la subversión y la reafirmación del antropocentrismo de la época, confundiendo aún más los límites entre lo humano y lo no humano. En un intento de expandir la lectura activista de la obra de Simon Estok, se interpreta esta confusión como una crítica implícita, aunque cautelosa y ambigua, del consumo y el control animal.

Palabras clave: *Enrique VI*, Parte II, Shakespeare, estudios sobre animalidad, ecocrítica, imágenes animales, consumo y control animal.

Abstract

Shakespeare's plays make extensive use of nonhuman animal imagery and references to the natural world in order to exemplify, explain or qualify human behaviour, as well as social and political issues. 2 Henry VI, the second play of Shakespeare's first tetralogy, is of course no exception. Nonetheless, the history plays have quite logically been the object of more social and political analyses and seem to have been mostly ignored by animal studies and ecocritics. The present article focuses on nonhuman animal imagery in the second part of Henry VI, and the consequent representation of animals in the play, to explore Shakespeare's treatment of the relationship between human and nonhuman animals in the early modern period. Drawing on Greg Garrard's typology of animal representation, the paper first demonstrates how Shakespeare, following standard practices at the time, deploys animal metaphors and comparisons that are nonetheless based on prior anthropomorphic projections of human qualities onto animals. As a second step, the study identifies in the play a set of images

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related to animal control in order to argue that these alternately subvert and contain the anthropocentrism of the period, further blurring the boundaries between human and nonhuman animals. In an attempt to build on Simon Estok's activist reading of the play, this article understands this blurring of boundaries as an embedded critique of animal consumption and control, albeit cautious and ambiguous.

Keywords: 2 Henry VI, Shakespeare, animal studies, ecocriticism, animal imagery, animal consumption and control.

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*Human and animal are marked by the same means,
are linked in their capacity to be interpellated into a community:
of ownership, state justice, or dominion.*

Erica Fudge, *Renaissance Beasts: Of Animals, Humans, and Other Wonderful Creatures*

Shakespeare's plays make extensive use of nonhuman animal imagery and references to the natural world in order to exemplify, explain or qualify human behaviour, as well as social and political issues. Both the references to a wider cosmology and this identified "rhetoric of animality" (Baker in Garrard, 2012, p. 153) have been well documented within the field of Shakespeare studies, especially regarding their metaphorical or symbolic use; in Simon Estok's words, "this interest has been thematic" (2007, p. 61). Since the beginning of the 21st century, however, the study of Shakespeare's nonhuman animals has been approached from a new angle: that of ecocriticism or, more specifically, animal studies. This shift in the critical position means, first and foremost, taking an activist standpoint "committed to effecting change", "making connections", and embracing the plurality of "other activist theories" (Estok, 2007, p. 63). Translated into literary scholarship, this activism should result in an abandonment of an "instrumental attitude, by which animals are objectified" and viewed as devoid of any agency within culture (Fudge, 2004a, pp. 2-4). In other words, one of the main goals of animal studies in relation to literary criticism is to view animals in their own right and not only as a means to further understand some other aspect of a particular work or author.

2 Henry VI, the second play of Shakespeare's first tetralogy, is of course no exception when it comes to the abundance of animal imagery and comparisons with the natural world that can be found in it. Nonetheless, the history plays have quite logically been the object of more social and political analyses and seem to have been ignored by animal studies, with the possible exception of *Richard III* (Olson, 2003; Raber, 2014). Following Simon Estok's and Erica Fudge's ideas about the importance of subjecting early modern texts to this kind of criticism, the present article focuses on nonhuman animal imagery in the second part of *Henry VI*, and its consequent representation of animals, to explore Shakespeare's treatment of the relationship between human and nonhuman animals in this period. Drawing on Greg Garrard's typology of animal representation (2011, p. 154), the paper first demonstrates how Shakespeare, following standard practices at the time, deploys animal metaphors and comparisons that are nonetheless based on prior anthropomorphic projections of human qualities onto animals.

As a second step, the study identifies in the play a set of images related to animal control in order to argue that these alternately subvert and contain the anthropocentrism of the period, further blurring the boundaries between human and nonhuman animals. In an attempt to expand and build on Estok's activist reading of the play (2007), this blurring of boundaries is understood here as an

embedded critique of animal consumption, albeit cautious and ambiguous. Through this analysis, this article hopes to contribute to current debates in the field of animal and Shakespeare studies, by making visible certain meanings that might otherwise be lost to the contemporary reader.¹

Before going into the analysis proper, it is important to state two of the main reasons why an activist reading of Shakespeare's work within the field of animal studies is valuable to current issues and debates. The first is related to the basic assumption that underlies every kind of historical study: knowing and understanding the mechanisms, beliefs and ideas of the past is key to knowing and understanding current problems and devising possible solutions. This idea is supported by both Estok and Fudge, and the latter makes it explicit when she asserts that

[b]y understanding the past we can begin to reassess the present in ways that might upset some of the apparent stability in our current modes of living. (...) our current relationships with animals can be better interpreted and criticized from a historical perspective. The study of the early modern period has much to offer to the understanding of human-animal relations in the present because it unsettles the naturalness of those contemporary relations. (2004a, p. 10)

Thus, the present paper intends to throw light on the relationship between human and nonhuman animals in the early modern period to help us rethink some of our own contemporary practices regarding animal commodification and consumption.

The second is related to the specific value contained in the study of the early modern period as opposed to later ones, and this second reason has to do with the fact that Shakespeare's plays are written and set in pre-Enlightenment, pre-Cartesian times. Early modern relationships between human and nonhuman animals, as some critics have noticed (Egan, 2015; Shannon, 2009), were partly shaped by the fact that Enlightenment hyperrationality and empiricism were still to come, and are thus key to our questioning of "the apparent stability in our current mode of living" (Fudge, 2004a, p. 10). Bruce Boehrer (1999), for example, studies the rise of the household pet during the 16th and 17th centuries and claims that, until the 18th century, the notion of household pet was not a clear, well-defined concept but one in process, which could then be ambiguous. Since people "may and often do form personal attachments to animals that cannot be kept indoors, are wild or only semidomesticated," in the 16th century it was still not clear "what constitute[d] a household and animal and what [did] not" (Boehrer, 1999, pp. 153-4).

Tellingly, Boehrer gives the example of the lamb, which is analysed later in this study, as an animal that played this ambiguous role in the early modern period (Ibid., p. 154). Gabriel Egan asserts that the Cartesian conception of animals as complex machines "established a sharp and easily articulated and understood distinction between humans and animals" (2015, p. 98). Following Boehrer, Egan adds that "there was a loose consensus on this topic a few decades earlier, in Shakespeare's time, but it was far from clearly defined and without problems" (Ibid.). Both authors, then, signal the much closer and less defined relationship between human and nonhuman animals that was characteristic of early modern times.

This ambiguity in the efforts to define humanity and the relationships between human and nonhuman animals in the early modern period prove essential to an understanding of animals in Shakespeare's plays, since "nonhuman animals were the first line of attack" against which supposedly human and nonhuman traits were measured, and "Shakespeare participates both in

1. The present article was produced within the wider research project carried out at the Escuela de Lenguas Modernas of the Universidad del Salvador: "The Non-human as a Character in Shakespeare's Plays. An Ecocritical Approach to the Study of the First Tetralogy: *Henry VI* (1, 2, 3) and *Richard III*", led by Dr. Malvina Aparicio (2017-2018).

resolving and exacerbating that confusion" (Estok 2007, p. 69). Pia F. Cuneo claims that nonhuman animals were one of the phenomena used to perform human identity (2014, p. 3). On the other hand, Fudge explains that "animals were not easy beings to contemplate. (...) [T]hey provoked unease about the distinct nature of humanity; they undid the boundaries between human and beast even as they appeared to cement them (...)" (2004a, p. 13). That is to say, before the human/animal divide established during the Enlightenment and still in force today (Shannon, 2009), nonhuman animals could both help define or unsettle what it meant to be human. One such case in *2 Henry VI* that is analysed later can be seen in the figure of the butcher, who is at times associated with human dominion over animals and sometimes used as an example of violence and cruelty. It is possible to see, then, how the early modern text reflects and reinforces these tensions.

The worldview that prevailed during the early modern period is what E. M. W. Tillyard has called the Great Chain of Being, in which each kind of object in the universe is arranged in hierarchical order, from inanimate matter to God (Egan, 2015, p. 100). This non-binary, hierarchical cosmology "allows for a metaphor of primacy" (Ibid., p. 101) which gives rise, for example, to the association of nobility with lions and innocence with lambs. In two very different essays, both John Berger (2009) and Laurie Shannon (2009) also attribute the ubiquity of animal imagery to the close contact between human and nonhuman animals that existed during the early modern period. In this Great Chain, "humans were measured as much in contradistinction to angels as to animals, taking their place in a larger cosmography" (Ibid., p. 474). Shannon underscores the inclusivity of this early modern cosmology that, although hierarchical and rigid, was devoid of the "human exceptionalism" and essential binarism that characterizes the post-Enlightenment period (Ibid., p. 477).

Nonetheless, even if the Great Chain of Being did not yet embrace the human/animal divide, human beings were above all other animals in the chain. This anthropocentrism, exposed by Fudge (2000), and later Estok (2007), can be easily identified in the animal imagery of *2 Henry VI*, this paper argues, in the form of a two-phase likeness: anthropomorphism + zoomorphism. In his typology of animal representation, Greg Garrard (2011, p. 154) organizes in a chart the different ways to refer to animals in relation to human beings. Possibly due to early modern cosmology, all instances of animal representation in the play are initially zoomorphic: likeness of humans to animals, as has been already noted in other early modern texts. Moreover, a quick survey shows that practically all of the images in *2 Henry VI* can be classified according to their origin into one of these three categories: proverbs, religion, or the Classical world.

The first part of this study is concerned, however, with the mechanism underlying some of these images, particularly with cases of what Garrard terms crude zoomorphism, which he associates with racist representation, and which is identified in the play in the examples where animal imagery is used to illustrate negative traits in a character. Garrard explains that when we "damn other people with zoomorphic terminology," this "depends in turn upon a prior, crudely anthropomorphic projection of despised human qualities onto these animals" (2011, p. 160). That is to say that when a character in the play is compared to an animal in an insulting or offensive way, it is actually animals that are first likened to humans by being endowed with despicable qualities that "bear no relationship to those of actual animals" (Ibid., p. 161).

Thus, when talking about Gloucester, Suffolk accuses the fox of being deceitful because it steals the lamb silently (3.1.55-7). Later, and again referring to Gloucester's condition as Lord Protector, Suffolk makes an analogy with the fox who is made "surveyor of the fold" even if he is "being accused of a crafty murder" and he also portrays it as an "enemy to the flock" (3.1.253-8). These characterizations of the fox remind us too much of Aesop's fables; it is quite easy to accept them as natural and view them as very appropriate images for Suffolk's purpose of describing Gloucester as

a cunning and deceitful traitor. But can we actually accuse the fox of being a disingenuous murderer and an enemy to the sheep?

In a similar vein, when planning how to recover his usurped crown, York compares himself with a “labouring spider” because he “weaves tedious snares to trap [his] enemies”, as well as to a snake who will sting the nobles’ hearts while “cherished in [their] breasts” (3.1.338-43). The snake is also described by Salisbury as gliding slyly towards the King (3.2.268). The Queen has her own least favourite animals to characterize Gloucester: a “hateful raven” (3.1.76), “ravenous wolves” (3.1.78), a “mournful crocodile” that “[w]ith sorrow snares relenting passengers” (3.1.226-7) and even a snake that stings an innocent child (3.1.228-30). Furthermore, in Act 4, Suffolk calls the Lieutenant that has ordered his death an “[o]bscure and lousy swain” (4.1.50), and Whitmore then returns the favour calling Suffolk a “forlorn swain” (4.1.65). Last but not least, both curs (3.1.18) and drones (4.1.109) are associated with characters considered as socially inferior, thus applying a social class system to the animal kingdom.

Estok claims that “[b]y placing the human on the same level as the morally inconsiderable natural world, these metaphors implicitly carry possibilities and permissibilities for mortal violence in their meaning” (2007, p. 73), a violence directed both at the human and nonhuman natural world. Apart from being “clearly not the favourites of (...) animal husbandry” (Ibid.), what all these nonhuman animals have in common is that they are being anthropomorphized so that they can work as insults or analogies to thieves, murderers and schemers.

When analysing *Richard III*, Greta Olson traces the unfavourable position of dogs in the play to popular, Classical and Biblical origins. She then proceeds to explain how canine behaviour is anthropomorphized “to illustrate [Richard’s] dangerous ability to con his enemies into a blindness about his real intentions” (2003, p. 313), just like the deceitful fox or the sly snake in 2 *Henry VI*. In her article, Olson emphasizes that the images of Richard as a dog, a pig, a frog or a spider are all based on human perception of or popular ideas about these animals. At one point, Olson addresses the reader: “[s]ince when, one may ask, did pigs bathe in blood or eat human bodies?” (2003, p. 315). One may also ask, do spiders weave traps for their enemies in order to recover some stolen right? Do snakes glide slyly or simply silently? Why should a raven be hateful, a crocodile mournful or a swain obscure and lousy?

While these may or may not be our favourite creatures, here they are being attributed human behaviour and, even worse, human faults. According to Berger, “[u]ntil the 19th century, (...), anthropomorphism was integral to the relation between man and animal and was an expression of their proximity. [It] was the residue of the continuous use of animal metaphor” (2009, p. 21). The truth is, dogs and swains, to name just two examples, are still used as insults today. The same mechanism is at play in racist representation or when we condemn human violence with words like “savage” (Olson, 2003, p. 301) or “brutal” (Garrard, 2011, p. 160). Garrard asks another insightful question: “[c]ertainly humans should not be treated ‘like animals’, but why should animals be treated ‘like animals’?” (Ibid.) Without previously bestowing human behaviour on animals, feelings and attitudes, the comparisons would not even be possible. One last question comes to mind: whose lack of compassion and civility are we actually condemning?

The previous analysis shows how the anthropocentrism and speciesism inherent in the Great Chain of Being are also reflected in the mechanism that allowed, and still allows, human beings to employ zoomorphic terminology as insults or negative qualifiers. A subsequent effect of the uncovering of this two-phase likeness operation is that it makes us rethink “the meaning of human animality” (Garrard, 2011, p. 160), and question the boundaries between the human and the nonhuman: while the initial purpose of this kind of images is to debase the human to the supposedly

lower level of the animal, a second look at them might show us that the distinction is far from clear. However, it may very well be argued that Shakespeare is here simply building his imagery on popular notions and beliefs of the time regarding these animals, just as he does when only zoomorphism can be found, such as when Gloucester is compared to "the sucking lamb or harmless dove" (3.1.71), and that no second reading is intended.

The second part of this study focuses on another group of images related to animal consumption and use that seem to condemn these practices and purposely challenge the position of humanity in the Chain, and contrasts them with those whose purpose seems to be to reaffirm human dominion, thereby definitely confounding the limits between man and beast. For this second part of the argument, the paper builds on Simon Estok's reading of *2 Henry VI* (2007), in which he understands Jack Cade's vegetarianism and the King's plea for animals (3.1.210-13) as a "subversive promise but ultimate containment of the play's critique against meat [which] is part of a larger tradition that silences popular radical vegetarian environmentalist ethics" (2007, p. 74).

The first of these subversive images is a metaphor that can be found three times in the play: to lime the bush, the "practice of smearing branches and twigs with birdlime to ensnare prey" (1.3.89n). The first time it is used by Suffolk to explain to the Queen what he will do to the Duchess of Gloucester (1.3.89), in the second occasion it is used by the Duchess herself to describe what Suffolk will do to her husband, Duke Humphrey (2.4.54), and the third instance is uttered by the Cardinal right before his death, when he is haunted by Gloucester's murder (3.3.16). In all three examples this form of hunting is used to represent a plot or a trap devised by the real enemies to the King, thus associating it with negative ideas of deceit and treachery.

To continue with bird images, the next one is the first example of Estok's claim that "Henry is a weak king, and his weakness is ideologically inseparable from his expression of sympathy for animals" (2007, p. 74). While hawking with Suffolk, Gloucester and the Cardinal, King Henry, admiring Gloucester's falcon's flight, equates man and animal as God's creations and marvels: "To see how God in all his creatures works! / Yea, man and birds are fain of climbing high" (2.1.7-8). Nonetheless, and here comes the first containing image, a few lines later Gloucester undermines this equality in his need to reply to Suffolk's accusation "of being an ambitious, predatory bird who flies higher than those around him" (Carr, 1972, p. 410). Gloucester then returns the bird to a lower position in the Chain: "My lord, 'tis but a base ignoble mind / That mounts no higher than a bird can soar" (2.1.13-4). In this way, while the first three examples align bird ensnaring with conspiracy and murder and indirectly condemn the practice itself, the hawking scene, ironically one of animal use for entertainment, leaves us quite at a loss regarding humans and hawks. Henry, the weak King, sees them as equally fond of flying high, both powerful and ambitious, but this equality does not last long. However, even if Gloucester immediately restores the previous order, the issue has been raised.

The next pair of contrasting images features dogs, usually frequent nonhuman animals in Shakespeare's plays but which do not abound in *2 Henry VI*. What is interpreted as the subversive image here is a proverb uttered by Gloucester when accused of treason in front of the King and later imprisoned: "A staff is quickly found to beat a dog" (3.1.171). He uses the proverb to refer to how the Queen, York, Suffolk and the Cardinal falsely accuse him of several acts of treachery so as to have him imprisoned and later killed. The proverb itself criticizes human weakness and gratuitous cruelty: it is very easy to punish a dog and vent one's fury on it, most probably a household animal that will not attack back, when one is frustrated or worried about something else. Opposed to this proverb, however, is a metaphor used by George, one of Cade's rebels, when they are gathering to act. Referring to the tanner's son, George says that "[h]e shall have the skins of [their] enemies to

make dog's leather of" (4.2.21-2). According to Knowles' note (4.2.22n), dog's leather was the cheapest and was used for making gloves. With this metaphor, then, Shakespeare both returns to the common use of dog as an insult and, moreover, reiterates the correspondence of animal consumption with victory and dominion over one's enemies.²

The following subset of images is that related to sheep, oxen and butchery, by far Shakespeare's favourite stock to create confusing contradictions in this play. In a paper that explores, from a non-activist standpoint, the functions of animal imagery in *2 Henry VI*, Virginia Carr identifies the images of lambs and shepherds with "the prey-predator-protector theme" (1972, p. 410). "The butchery imagery," she says later, "adds to the themes of blood and sacrifice" (Ibid., p. 411). Actually, if we analyse these images from the perspective of animal consumption, it is possible to see that there is a much more complex meaning behind them.

The first image we come across is the one which Estok (2007, p. 74) analyses as a critique of meat consumption, the King's plea for animals:

And as the butcher takes away the calf
And binds the wretch and beats it when it strains,
Bearing it to the bloody slaughterhouse,
Even so remorseless have they borne him hence [...] (3.1.210-13).

Here, King Henry is comparing Gloucester's unfair imprisonment, which ultimately ends in his murder, with the butcher's slaughter of the calf. The King goes on to compare himself with the mother looking hopelessly for its taken offspring. This is the first but definitely not the only "correspondence between the butchery of people and the butchery of animals in this play" (Estok, 2007, p. 74). Fudge asserts that "[v]iolence and eating meat were inextricably linked" in the early modern period (2004b, p. 75), and this is certainly visible in the following images. The next example is found in Warwick's speech, after Gloucester's death has been discovered and it is probable that he has been murdered. Talking to the Queen, Warwick compares Gloucester's death with a scene in which it is obvious that a butcher has slaughtered a heifer even if he was not seen doing it (3.2.88-90), once again putting on an equal footing treacherous murder and slaughter.

The last subversive image comes from Jack Cade when, before the rebellion, he laments himself "that of the skin of an innocent lamb should be made parchment; that parchment, being scribbled o'er, should undo a man" (4.2.73-5). In these lines, Cade is, on the one hand, condemning the slaughter of an "innocent lamb" to make parchment. On the other, he is positioning the slaughter of the lamb as a sort of previous or necessary step to the restraining power of a legally binding document, once again drawing a parallelism between butchery and the loss of control over one's life. The lament becomes even more meaningful when we take into account that "in northern dialects the word 'pet' initially referred to an abandoned -or 'cade' -lamb that is raised by hand" (Boehrer, 1999, p. 154). Although no pun may have been intended, it is also possible that Shakespeare purposely made Jack Cade side with these innocent abandoned creatures. A deeper and more extensive study is needed to determine this.³

It is also fruitful to analyse this image in tandem with Cade's "compelled vegetarianism" that is "characterized as the diet of losers in the garden of Iden" (Estok, 2007, p. 72). Interestingly enough, Hillary Eklund considers Cade's hunger as a kind of diet, though involuntary, in the light of Renaissance ideas about "material *excess* as a greater threat to corporeal, moral, and political well-being" (2014, p. 53). Thus, she understands Cade's vegetarian diet as allowing him to think and act

2. For more on dogs in Shakespeare's plays, see Boehrer, 1999.

3. For a detailed exploration of this topic, see Kay, 2011.

"in solidarity with others" and to come "into direct contact with the soil of the garden" (Ibid., p. 59). In Fudge's discussion of vegetarianism in Renaissance times, two of its few supporters saw it as the key to a moderate and pure way of life (2004b, p. 72). When combining these elements, then, it seems as if Jack Cade, a figure diametrically opposed to the weak King, is also espousing a defence of animal welfare and a critique of meat consumption.

However, this reading is quickly challenged by a series of images that reinforce the indivisibility between human dominion and butchery. To start with, we come back to George and his dog's leather. Two lines later, when Dick the butcher's arrival is announced, George resorts to a Biblical image and proclaims that "sin is struck down like an ox, and iniquity's throat cut like a calf" (4.2.24-5). For all the King's and Cade's efforts to condemn the slaughter of innocent animals, George uses it as metaphor of victory against sin and iniquity, the violence that will enable them to carry out a successful rebellion. Moreover, after the first fight, Cade seems to have been taken over by this thirst for blood and thus congratulates Dick the butcher: "[t]hey fell before thee like sheep and oxen, and thou behaved'st thyself as if thou hadst been in thine own slaughterhouse" (4.3.3-5). What is more, he grants the butcher a special license to kill during Lent as a reward. After the initial victory, the butcher's work is praised and encouraged.

There is also an image in York's speech that further complicates the initial critique. After returning from Ireland with his army and being confronted by Buckingham, York is so angry that, inspired by Greek mythology, he exclaims that "[o]n sheep or oxen could [he] spend [his] fury" (5.1.27). Here we see how these animals have returned to the realm of property subjected to human mistreatment. When discussing the meaning of meat eating for Reformed theology, Fudge explains that "[t]he ambivalent status of humans at the meat table—the constant shift between humans as corrupt and humans as all powerful—also emerges in a number of other places in early modern English culture" (2004b, pp. 77-8). The juxtaposition of positive and negative images of butchery and slaughter just described is a clear example of this shift. The violence and cruelty condemned by King Henry, Warwick and Cade are subsequently endorsed and exalted by George, Cade himself and, finally, York.

Last but not least, there is one extended metaphor that works as the perfect summary for this discussion. In Act 5, Scene 1, York discovers that Somerset has not been arrested and he has been tricked. Here, York finally reveals his real object of recovering the crown. What follows is a verbal exchange between York and Old Clifford in which they deploy the metaphor of bear-baiting to describe how they will defeat each other in battle (5.1.144-66; 203-10). The origin of this metaphor is Warwick's heraldic symbol, the "rampant bear chained to the ragged staff" (5.1.203). It is York who first uses it when he calls Warwick and Salisbury his "two brave bears, / That with the very shaking of their chains / They may astonish these fell-lurking curs" (5.1.144-6). There follow Old Clifford and Richard, with images of death and pain of both bears and dogs that describe the coming fight. The metaphor of bear-baiting is again present at the beginning of Act 5, Scene 2, where the actual battle takes place and where, to make matters worse, horses are killed together with human companions (5.2.12).

Fudge gives bear-baiting as an example of the boundary confusion we have already discussed above because "[a]n ostensible function of such public animal shows was to enable even the lowest-born human spectator to experience pride in being demonstrably superior to at least some living creature" (Egan, 2015, p. 97). This superiority was manifest in the enjoyment of a spectacle that consisted in animals attacking and killing each other, which ended up "reducing the spectators to the level of beasts" (Ibid.). The play ends with a reference to a controversial but popular entertainment of the time based on animal control and suffering. What is more, it portrays this

spectacle hand in hand with a bloodied battle. Once again, in this metaphor, there is a correspondence between animal subjugation and victory over one's enemies. The ultimate effect of this correspondence is to reinforce the speciesism and anthropocentrism of the time: the brave and fierce nobles have the power to defeat their enemies and thus debase them to the alleged lower level of nonhuman animals used for human entertainment. However, if we consider the boundary confusion generated by bear-baiting, we may also ask if Shakespeare might have been trying to say something else about this battle by describing it in those terms, or if this is just the product of a contemporary reading. As in the case of Cade's lament for lambs, further research would be needed before attempting to answer this question.

This paper has explored Shakespeare's representation of the relationship between human and nonhuman animals in the early modern period through an analysis of animal imagery in *2 Henry VI*. Advocating an activist reading of the play aligned with the aims of ecocriticism in general and animal studies in particular, it has argued that, through his deployment of animal imagery, Shakespeare both reflects and participates in the blurring of boundaries between the human and the nonhuman. The article has demonstrated that, while nonhuman animals are usually portrayed in opposition to and at the service of humans, the higher position of human beings in the chain is repeatedly threatened. In other words, this paper has demonstrated how Shakespeare's *2 Henry VI* is another example of Fudge's claim that "[a]nimals may be mere instruments for human use, but that use can bring with it a reminder not only of human dominance but also of human vulnerability" (2004a, p. 2).

The first part of the essay uncovers the mechanism behind examples of crude zoomorphism in the play, showing how the use of animals as insults or negative images requires a prior anthropomorphic projection to take place for us to associate those animals with the human traits we are describing. It is argued that, while this mechanism was, and still is, a standard procedure and Shakespeare probably did not intend the audience to make any secondary reading of it, this double likeness is nonetheless one of the ways in which human superiority is put into question to the point that it is not clear, after all, who is actually being insulted or denigrated.

The second part of this paper does argue for an intentional blurring of boundaries and a critique of animal consumption and subjugation on Shakespeare's part, building on Simon Estok's reading of *2 Henry VI* as raising a challenge to a meat-based constituency (2007, p. 76). Through the analysis of images of birds, dogs, sheep and oxen, and the cruel sport of bear-baiting, the essay identifies a "subversive promise but ultimate containment of the play's" (Ibid., p. 74) questioning of anthropocentrism and speciesism. These images that seem to condemn bird snaring and compare humans to hawks, but later have humans venting their fury on dogs and sheep, reflect Berger's identified dualism in the treatment of animals that was made possible due to the closer contact between humans and animals before the 19th century: "[t]hey were subjected and worshipped, bred and sacrificed" (2009, p. 16). Fudge explains that "[w]here there is a clear collapse of difference, there is also an urgent need to reiterate human superiority" (2004a, p. 2), and this is certainly what the containing images in the play do, they reinforce human control of animals, as well as of other humans. What matters, however, is that King Henry has put humans and hawks at the same level and, together with Warwick, criticized the butcher's cruelty, and that Cade has lamented the use of a lamb to make parchment. These challenges having been raised, the basis for human superiority has been questioned.

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